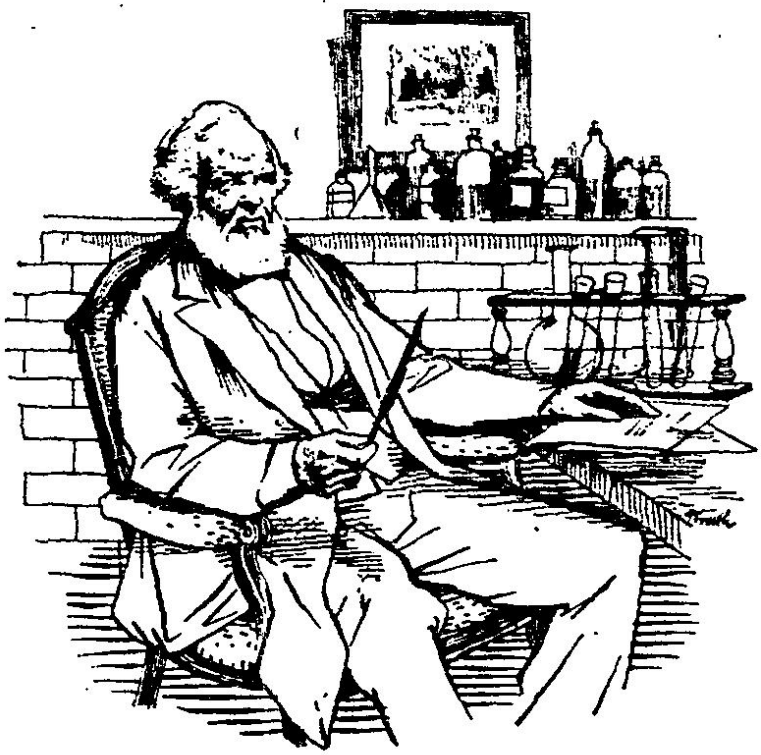

Thomas Clark,

a Scottish doctor, made the important discovery that hard water can be softened by chemical means. A common cause of what is known as "temporary" hardness is the presence of dissolved calcium bicarbonate. This can be removed by boiling, the "hardness" being turned into insoluble calcium carbonate —familiar to most people as the "fur" in kettles. Temporary hardness not only wastes soap, but is a serious defect in water used for industrial purposes. The "fur" deposited inside boilers and pipes reduces their efficiency and leads to undue fuel consumption. Clark discovered that the correct quantity of lime added to temporarily hard water causes chemical reactions which change both the lime itself and the unwanted calcium bicarbonate into an insoluble carbonate. This can be removed, leaving the water soft, and suitable for use in steam boilers and for industrial processes.

Clark was born in Ayr in 1801. Thirty years later he obtained an M.D. at Glasgow University, but instead of practising medicine he went to work at the St. Rollox chemical works. In 1833 he was appointed Professor of Chemistry at Marischal College, Aberdeen, where he remained until his retirement twenty-seven years later. He died in 1867, but his memory is perpetuated in "Clark's method" of water softening, which is still in use. All users of water—from the power engineer to the housewife—owe an incalculable debt to Clark's investigations.

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